



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Inseparable Poles of the Aron

בְּטִבְעַת הָאָרוֹן יִהְיוּ הַבַּדִּים לֹא יִסְרוּ מִמֶּנּוּ: (שמות כה, טו)

The poles will be in the rings of the Aron; they shall not be removed from it. (Shemos 25:15)

When we learn about the construction of the *Mishkan*, we need to keep in mind that *kedushah* and *Mikdash*, and the presence of the *Shechinah*, is not just about a certain place. It is more about the person himself. If a Jew sanctifies himself as he should, by learning Torah and keeping *mitzvos*, he himself becomes the *Mikdash*, as it says:

הַיִּכָּל ה' הַיִּכָּל ה' הֵמָּה – They are the sanctuary of *Hashem*, the sanctuary of *Hashem*.¹

And it says:

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכָם – They shall

¹ Yirmeyahu 7:4.



This week's parsha publication is dedicated as *ilui neshama* to ר' מנחם מנדל בן יחזקאל ז"ל for the day of his *yahrtzeit* which falls this week.



make a Sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell within them.²

After the *Mishkan* was constructed, where did *Hashem* dwell? In the *Mishkan*? No, within the people themselves, as it says, "...and I will dwell within them." This teaches that the presence of the *Shechinah* is within the Jewish people themselves.

We can learn a lot of important lessons about our daily *avodah* from the design of the *Mishkan* and what it contained. We will focus on the *Aron*, which was the most sublime of the *Mishkan's* objects.

Early Torah sources say that the *Aron Hakodesh*, as well as the Torah scroll and *Luchos* it contained, represent *talmidei chachamim*, who are the receptacle of the Torah. And when it says, "You shall place the poles in the rings" of the *Aron*, this refers to working people who support the *talmidei chachamim* financially. These supporters are the "poles" that carry the *Aron* and keep it up. The Torah says that these poles must be connected to the *Aron* at all times and may not be removed from it. This signifies that the *avodah* of the Torah's supporters is not finished when they "carry the *Aron*" every once in a while. On the contrary, "They shall not be removed from it." They need to keep a constant and unbroken connection with the Torah and those who learn it.

It is also written about the *Aron*:

וְצִפִּיתָ אֹתוֹ זָהָב טָהוֹר – You shall plate it with pure gold.³

This signifies that we should support places of

² *Shemos* 25:8.

³ *Ibid* v. 11.

Torah learning to the best of our ability. *Chazal* say:

Anyone who helps *talmidei chachamim* to support themselves will merit sitting in the heavenly *yeshivah*, as it says *כִּי בְצֵל הַחֵכְמָה בְּצֵל הַקֶּסֶף* – "The shade of wisdom is with the shade of money"^{4,5}

All this shows that learning Torah and supporting Torah are two inseparable parts of the *Aron*. And *Talmidei chachamim*, too, are obligated to give money for support of Torah, just as working people, too, are obligated to learn Torah and devote their time to it as best they can. The two parts join together to be one complete *Aron*, fitting for the presence of the *Shechinah*.

About all the *Mishkan's* other utensils, the Torah says *וַעֲשִׂיתָ*, "You shall make," in the singular. But about the *Aron* it says *וַעֲשׂוּ*, "They shall make." Plural. This indicates that all the Jewish people participated in making the *Aron*. All should come and busy themselves with the *Aron* so that all will merit having a part in Torah.⁶

When the *Aron* and its supporting poles are together, then it is written:

וְאָרוֹן בְּרִית ה' נֹסַע לִפְנֵיהֶם – The *Aron* of *Hashem's* covenant travels before them.⁷

Chazal describe what would happen when the *Aron* traveled before them in the Wilderness:

Two sparks would shoot out from between the two poles of the *Aron* and kill snakes and scorpions and burn up the thorns, and the

⁴ *Koheles* 7:12.

⁵ *Pesachim* 53b.

⁶ *Midrash Rabbah*.

⁷ *Bemidbar* 10:13.



smoke [of the *ketores*] would rise in a pillar, and the whole world would be perfumed from its fragrance, and the nations would say מי זאת עלה מן המדבר כתימרות עשן מקטרת מור ולבונה מכל אבקת רוכל – “Who is this ascending from the Wilderness like pillars of smoke, burning with myrrh and frankincense and all powders of the perfumer?”^{8,9}

8 *Shir Hashirim* 3:6.

9 See *Tanchuma, Vayakhel* 7.

Even today, if the *Aron* will be whole, Torah inside and pure gold outside, and the supporting poles will be attached to it, this will cause all the enemies of the Jewish people to be burned up like the snakes and scorpions in the *Midbar*, and the world will fill with the scent of perfumed incense, myrrh and frankincense. ●



Two Crowns for One Table

וְעָשִׂיתָ לוֹ מִסְגֶּרֶת טַפַּח סָבִיב וְעָשִׂיתָ זָרְזָהב לְמִסְגֶּרֶתוֹ סָבִיב: (שמות כה, כה)

You shall make a molding for it, all around, of one handbreadth, and you shall make a golden crown on the molding, all around. (*Shemos* 25:25)

Some objects in the *Mikdash* had a golden crown on them. They are the *Aron*, the incense altar and the Table. The *Aron* was the receptacle that contained the Torah. The incense altar represented *avodas Hashem*. And the Table, the *Shulchan*, represented *parnassah*.

These are the three pillars on which the world stands: *Torah*, *avodah* and *gemilus chasadim*. And they are the three crowns mentioned in *Pirkei Avos*: The crown of Torah, the crown of *Kehunah* and the crown of Kingship.¹

What does it mean to wear a crown?

A crown signifies greatness and supremacy. The head is the highest part of the body and is its leading part. And a crown is even higher. It is not part of the head; it is over the head. When we put a crown on someone's head, we are saying that his greatness

and rulership “goes over our head.” He is above and beyond the people; he rules supreme.

We say in prayers:

כְּתָר יִתְּנוּ לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ – *Hashem* our G-d, they will grant You a crown.²

The angels and the Jewish people praise *Hashem* by saying that He is above and beyond anything we can even conceive, and that He rules supreme over all. He is “above our head.” We describe this figuratively by saying that we place a “crown” upon Him, because a crown is above everything.

What does the crown on the *Aron* mean?

It signifies that someone who acquires Torah learning is thereby uplifted. He is far, far above the common people. And the crown on the altar means that people who devote themselves to *avodas Hashem*, people who are great *tzaddikim*, are thereby

1 *Pirkei Avos* 4:13.

2 *Kedushah of Musaf*, according to *Nusach Sefarad*.

uplifted. They are above common people entangled in the pursuit of temporal matters.

But what does the crown on the *Shulchan* signify? The Table represents riches and material wealth. Is someone with a lot of wealth necessarily a superior person?

About the crown of the *Shulchan* it says וְעָשִׂיתָ זָרָהּ לְמִסְגָּרָתוֹ סָבִיב – “You shall make a golden crown on the molding, all around.” Rashi explains that this is actually the same crown as was mentioned earlier, but many Commentators say that it is a different crown, and the Table thus has two crowns: one above, around the top of the Table, and another one below, around the sides of the Table, on the molding.

Accordingly, the *Shulchan* had a second crown, unlike any other object in the *Mishkan*. What does this signify?

The *nisayon* of wealth is one of the hardest *nisyonos* of all. Because if a person has a hundred, he wants to get two hundred, and if he has two hundred, he wants to get four hundred. The more he has, the more he lacks, thus he feels that he needs to acquire more and more. Most of a person's activities in this world center around *parnassah*, to bring in as much as he can for himself.

So if a person goes against this *yetzer hara*, and,

instead of getting more and more for himself, he gives and donates and bestows, he is indeed an upraised person. He is above the common folk and is worthy of wearing a golden crown on his head.

This explains why the *Shulchan* has a crown. But why two? It seems that one crown corresponded to virtuous wealthy people, as we explained, and is about the *tzedakah* they do with their money. The other crown corresponded to the middle-class and the poor. It was about how one eats. A person can turn his own table and his daily eating into something tremendously great that places a golden crown on his head. This is if he recites his *berachos* with proper *kavanah*, and eats *l'sheim Shamayim*, in a seemly and respectful manner, and words of Torah are said at his table. Then his own table is like the *Mizbeach*.

When a person feels hungry, he is liable to forget about all these lofty ideas, and just rattle off a *berachah* rapidly so he can put food in his mouth. He gulps down the *berachah* and swallows it and it is gone and forgotten. This is not the way.

If a person has the patience to thank his Creator properly, and eat in a holy and pure manner, his own table is like the *Mizbeach* of the *Mikdash*, and his head bears a golden crown. ●

PARSHAH TOPIC

The Mishkan and You

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם: (שמות כה, ח)

You shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell within them. (*Shemos* 25:8)

Sefer Nefesh Hachayim describes the *Mishkan* as follows:

The *Mishkan* and the *Mikdash* contained

within them all the forces and all the worlds and all the orders of *kedushah*. All its rooms, storage places, attics and chambers, and all

the holy objects in it, were all in the image of that which is above. They had the image and likeness and form of the holy worlds and the orders of the *Merkavah*. They were established by David and Shmuel the Prophet. All the construction was done according to *Ruach Hakodesh*.¹

Chazal say also that the location chosen for *Beis Hamikdash*, which is called “the beauty of the world,” has a source in the Torah.²

Sefer Nefesh Hachayim goes on to say:

Chazal say in *Midrash Tanchuma*, in the beginning of *Parshas Pekudei*, that the *Mishkan* corresponds to the creation of the world. The *Midrash* enumerates the whole list of things that were in Creation and were also in the *Mishkan*.

This is why the Torah said about Betzalel [who constructed the *Mishkan*]: וַאֲמַלֵּא אֹתוֹ – “I filled him with the spirit of G-d, with wisdom, and understanding and knowledge.”³ Because the worlds were created with these three things, as it says, ה' בְּחָכְמָה יָסַד אֶרֶץ – “*Hashem* established the earth by wisdom.”⁴ This is why *Chazal* said,⁵ “Betzalel knew how to combine the letters by which heaven and earth were created.”

A member of the holy people, who also contains within him all the orders of Creation and the orders of the *Merkavah*, the entire world – he therefore has also the image and form of the *Mishkan* and the

Mikdash and all the objects in it. There is a correspondence to the order of the various segments of his body and how they connect to one another, and to all his faculties. The *Zohar* also breaks down the whole form of the *Mishkan* and the objects in it, explaining how they are all alluded to in the human being, with one-to-one correspondence according to their order.⁶

So explains R. Chaim Volozhiner in *Sefer Nefesh Hachayim*. Now we will explore the significance of this.

Hashem's Preferred Dwelling Place

Hashem created a world. Heavens and earth, trees and rocks, and millions of other details. The world as a whole has a certain shape and plan. It was planned out according to the purpose for which it was created.

What is the purpose of the world?

Chazal say:

When *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* created the world, He desired to have a dwelling place in the lower realms, just as He has in the upper realms.⁷

Hashem desired to make for Himself a house, a place for the *Shechinah* to rest. To this purpose, He built for Himself two places to live in, so to speak. One is the heavens above. But this “house” is of secondary importance to Him. The place where *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* prefers to dwell, to place His Presence, is the lower realms, our lowly world. This was *Hashem's* primary goal in creating the world.

Further on we will explain why *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* prefers to dwell below. But for now, it suffices to know that this is His Will, and that He created the world with this aim in mind. The entire world, with all its qualities and details, was deliberately planned

1 *Nefesh Hachayim* 1:4.

2 *Zevachim* 54b.

3 *Shemos* 31:3.

4 *Mishlei* 3:19.

5 *Berachos* 55a.

6 *Nefesh Hachaim* *ibid*.

7 *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Naso* 24.

so it will be a suitable place for the *Shechinah's* presence.

The upper realm, even though it is not *Hashem's* preferred place to dwell, is nevertheless fitting for His dwelling. It, too, is suitable to serve as *Hashem's* "house." So we must say that the upper worlds are built according to the same basic blueprint as the lower realm.

Our human eyes have a hard time seeing the similarity between the upper realm and the lower realm. Heaven seems to us so different from earth. But *Chazal* tell us a number of points of similarity between them.

The matter may be compared to a tractor and a car. They are both motor vehicles. Nevertheless, a superficial look at a passenger car and a tractor will not find much in common between them. Their shape is very different.

But the truth is they are basically the same thing. All the key components are the same in both. They both have wheels, they both have a motor, they both have a gas pedal and brakes, they both have seats for passengers.

There are some specific features that differ between them. A car has small wheels because it drives only on roads, whereas a tractor has big, wide wheels because sometimes it goes over dirt paths and through muddy puddles. But the basic blueprint of both types of vehicles is the same because they have the same purpose, which is to move and drive.

Now let's apply this to heaven and earth. Although we perceive a tremendous difference and distance between the upper realm and the lower one, nevertheless they both serve the same goal. And that

purpose is to provide a place for the *Shechinah* to dwell. So on a deeper level, both the upper worlds and the lower worlds have the same characteristics.

This applies to the *Mishkan* as well. It has exactly the same goal. It is a place for the *Shechinah* to dwell, as it says, "You shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell within them." So the same basic blueprint that the upper worlds follow is that which the *Mishkan* follows as well.

And the same can be said about the form of the Jewish person. Why, basically, did *Hashem* create human beings? So that He may bring His *Shechinah* to rest within them, as it says:

וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם – They are the sanctuary of *Hashem*, the sanctuary of *Hashem*.⁸

This is also why it says וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם – "You shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell within **them**." The *Shechinah* is meant to dwell within the Jewish people themselves.

So we have six things that are basically identical in their essential form. They are the human being, the *Mishkan*, *Beis Hamikdash*, the upper worlds, the lower worlds, and also the Torah. (*Sefer Nefesh Hachayim* explained at length in another place how the Torah, too, has this characteristic.) All these six things have the same basic nature.

They look to us as if they have different forms, but these external differences are not important. Their true form is their fundamental nature, which, as we explained, is the same for them all. ●

⁸ *Yirmeyahu* 7:4.

